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Berkeley Co. school awarded gold star for energy efficiency

June 20, 2012 | By MATTHEW UMSTEAD | matthew.umstead@herald-mail.com

MARTINSBURG, W.Va. — Spring Mills Primary School — Berkeley County's first "green" school — was awarded gold certification through the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design program, officials announced this week.

Less than 1 percent of all LEED projects in the nation are awarded gold certification or higher for incorporating substantial energy efficient and environmentally friendly features, architect Gregory A. Williamson told the Berkeley County Board of Education Monday night.

The school, which also is the state School Building Authority's first green school project, received the LEED certification for notable reductions in energy, lighting, water and material use, according to the architect and school officials.

Some of the features of the 63,380-square-foot building include:

Waterless urinals and dual-flush toilets, and reduced-flow kitchen equipment that use more than 30 percent less water.

A kitchen-waste pulping system and decomposing unit to reduce landfill-bound food waste by 78 percent compared to other county elementary schools. The remaining waste can be used as mulch or fertilizer for school or community projects.

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An insulated concrete form wall system, enhanced roof insulation and a geothermal heating, ventilation, air conditioning system and other features estimated to reduce energy use by 33 percent when compared to a conventional building of the same size.

A building floor plan, sloped ceilings and oversized windows to capture natural lighting for classrooms, which are oriented north or south.

When advertised for construction, the school was designed to receive silver certification through the four-level LEED rating system, which was developed by the U.S. Green Building Council, Williamson said. Only LEED platinum certification is higher than gold.

Aside from the Spring Mills school, only one other building is listed on the U.S. Building Council's online LEED certified project directory having gold certification, and no projects listed had been awarded platinum.

The state's first LEED gold building houses the Department of Energy Legacy Management Business Center in Morgantown, W.Va.

Williamson said there was some question whether school officials would receive credits for various building features to reach the LEED gold certification, but ultimately the effort was successful.



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County Schools Superintendent Manny Arvon had said the school district had "electives" to choose from when designing the building and decided to invest heavily in reducing food waste in the cafeteria.

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The total project cost was \$12.6 million, but the School Building Authority paid more than 90 percent of it, according to the architect and school officials.

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Arvon told board members that the new school, which opened in August, also won a merit award for sustainable design from the state chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

School officials decided not to pursue LEED certification for the new Spring Mills High School now under construction, but Arvon has said certain features in the primary school are being incorporated. The county's fourth high school is on track to be open in August 2013.

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